

THE BACA HOUSE

Upper Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Southwest District

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

John Gaw Meem, District Officer,  
Camino del Monte Sol, Santa Fe, New Mexico



## THE BACA HOUSE

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Upper Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico

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Owner: Miss Aurelia Baca and Mrs. Maria Baca Romero, daughters of Jose Albino Baca, 403 West National Avenue, West Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Date of Erection: 1852-1859.

Architect: Name unknown.

Builder: Don Jose Albino Baca.

Present Condition: Poor, vandalized, practically all windows, doors, panels, trim, portals in patio, stairway, flooring, et cetera, carried off.

Number of Stories: Main building, two and one half; rear portion, one.

Materials of Construction: Foundation: field stone, adobe mortar; floors: in building, pine, on portals, flagstone; walls: exterior, first story, adobe, adobe mortar, second story, half-timber and adobe, adobe mortar, attic, frame; interior walls: first and second stories, adobe adobe mortar, attic, frame; ceilings: wood; roof: pitched shingles and corrugated metal; trim: wood; lime plaster exterior and interior.

Other Existing Records: Two photographs, patio view and front view, circa 1890, copies attached, originals in custody of Miss Aurelia Baca, 403 West National Avenue, West Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Additional Data: Construction: the half timber construction of the second story walls is made up of 3" x 14" timbers placed vertically about three feet center to center, with 3" x 14" timbers placed vertically about three feet center to center, with 3" x 14" horizontal girts framed between the uprights about midway between 3" x 14" timbers. The interstices being filled with adobe brick and adobe mortar.

Lime plaster was used for all exterior and interior adobe walls. Parapet walls, above patio portal roof, are brick. The brick coping occurs only on patio side of one story portion of building.



Wood partitions in attic are of 1" x 6" beaded ceiling placed vertically on 2" x 4" top and bottom plates, one side only.

Roofs over attic and west wing of one story portion are shingles over 1" sheathing on 2" x 6" rafters 24" center to center. Roof over balance of one story portion is corrugated metal over 1" sheathing on 2" x 6" rafters 24" to 27" center to center.

All interior woodwork in attic is unpainted.

Ceilings of first story rooms, 1" boards on exposed beams or vigas; second story rooms, and attic of main building, T and G boards, those of second story rooms being painted and decorated. All rooms of main building on first and second floors have wood cornice. Interior walls on first floor have smooth, white plaster; those on second floor, papered.

There are three fireplaces on the first floor and three on the second floor. These are built of adobe with painted wood mantels and adobe hearths.

All doors and windows have wood trim, some panelled and with planted ornaments on exterior and interior.

Portal at first story, along front of building, is screened at each end with wood lattice made up of  $1\frac{1}{8}$ " x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " battens lapped diagonally about  $3\frac{3}{4}$ " center to center with door size arches opening in middle of grille. The portals on second floor are screened over hand rails at each end with wood grilles made of built uprights approximately  $2\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $1\frac{1}{8}$ " in size, rabbeted, about 8" center to center with  $1\frac{3}{16}$ " x  $\frac{9}{16}$ " members set diagonally in a diamond pattern.

Roof dormers have tin covering between shingles and sheathing. This projects a few inches below the eaves and is cut in scallops.

The present stairway including risers, treads, landings, skirting, turned balusters and handrail is black walnut.

Front and patio portals are paved with red sandstone flagging laid in a square pattern of random sizes. The walk and steps of front entrance are of the same material as portal floors. The floors of the portals in the patio are about six inches above the central portion of the patio and are edged with a sandstone curb about four inches wide.



Historical: The original building, one story in height, enclosing the patio, was constructed in 1852. A portal, the existing first story portion, extended across the building on the south. Portals, similar to existing patio portal at south side of the patio, extended along the other three sides of the patio.

The building at this time had a flat roof consisting of one inch boards laid over wood beams or vigas, on which was placed six to eight inches of adobe soil. This was graded to canales (roof spouts) extending through the outer adobe parapet walls. The parapet walls, on the inner or patio side, above the portal roof were constructed of common brick.

The corral, east of the house, is enclosed by a high adobe wall capped with red sandstone coping. The wall is in very poor condition. Most of the coping is gone and the wall has crumbled away at several places. Along the north wall of the corral were stables. These have been destroyed. The watering trough in the corral still exists but has been reconstructed recently.

The garden plot, north of house and corral, is enclosed on the north by a low wall of field stone laid up in adobe mortar; on the east by a high adobe wall and on the west by a barbed wire fence. This fence has been constructed very recently. Miss Baca states that the original west wall was adobe. The garden was irrigated from a small ditch running southerly along the east wall of the garden. It turned west at the south garden wall, running west along the wall to a point opposite the northeast corner of the portal curbing in the patio, where it turned under the floor of the north wing patio and patio portal; it then ran adjacent to the east and south curbs, in a shallow, stone lined ditch to the curbing at the southwest corner, where it ran under the portal and west wing floors to the small room on the west side of the building. The water ran through a wide, shallow, stone lined, open ditch in the room and discharged outside on the west. The water was used as a cooling agent for butter and milk stored in the room.

In 1859 the second story, attic, shingle roof over west patio wing and second story portals were added to the building. For this work an architect was commissioned. Miss Aurelia Baca could not remember his name. The construction at the time included a stairway, of wood construction, located near the south patio entrance and adjacent to the main building. This stairway extended from the first to second floor of portal only. A small wood stairway was constructed in the present stair hall, between second floor and attic.

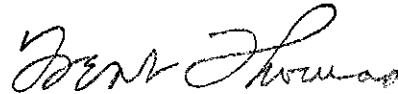


In 1860 more improvements were added. The present walnut stairway was built and the house decorated by a Mes. Maico, an artist from Paris, France, both on the interior and exterior.

All the lumber, millwork, hardware, and furnishings, incorporated in the construction undertaken in 1859 and 1860, were brought over the Santa Fe Trail by ox team from Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri.

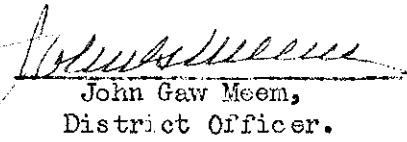
The building was occupied by the Baca family until 1914. Since that time it has deteriorated rapidly and has been vandalized until there is very little left. Miss Baca and Mrs. Romero have a native family residing in the house at present as guard against further vandalism. The present corrugated roof over the north and east patio wings has been added within the last ten years. It was added to prevent further erosion which was rapidly destroying the only portion of the building under adobe roof. The construction consisted of a framed wall of 2" x 4" studs and plates with shiplap sheathing extending above the brick coping and 2" x 6" rafters with 1" wood sheathing over which the corrugated metal roof was applied.

The foregoing information was furnished by Miss Aurelia Baca, 403 West National Avenue, West Las Vegas, New Mexico.



Trent Thomas,  
Architect in Charge,  
HABS, Southwest Unit.

Approved October 1st, 1940.



John Gaw Meem,  
District Officer.